Michael Hartmann (63) comes from Canada just for St. Nicholas' Day – a visit to his old homeland

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editor

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It's just a brief visit: Michael Hartmann travels all the way from Canada to Ahaus almost exclusively for St. Nicholas Day. And he's overjoyed to be re-visiting a childhood memory.

3 minReading time

It's December 6, 1996. Our newsroom is reporting on drug tourism in the border region, the opening of an exhibition on forced labor at the adult education center, and inspections of the newly introduced organic waste bins. But Michael Hartmann only has eyes for the photo at the very top. It shows him with his

daughter Sasha on his shoulders, right next to Santa Claus at the reception in the castle courtyard. She was four years old at the time.

Fast forward to 2022: Michael Hartmann (now 63) is standing in the editorial office with his partner Annie Mason (62). He asks if there's any way he could still get hold of this photo. He's only in town for a few days, having traveled all the way from Canada for the St. Nicholas visit in Ahaus.

He eventually explains the questioning looks on the faces of those around him. Born in Dortmund, he had lived in Ahaus from 1965 onwards. And that's where he first encountered Saint Nicholas. "A very fond, but also somewhat eerie childhood memory," he says today, laughing. Suddenly, a strange man with bushy hair and that enormous hat was standing in the living room. And yet, for him, it's an integral part of the Advent season.

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287 – Münsterland Zeitung
ntag, 6. Dezember 1996 AH 1

Ahauser Zeitung

GUTEN MORGEN!

Kontrollen bezahlen lassen

Gleich zwei Klagen von Bürgern hängen der Gemeinde Südlohn in Sachen Biomüll an. Die Verwaltung hofft jetzt, durch eine nachträgliche, rückwirkende Änderung der Gebührensatzung mit einem blauen Auge davonzukommen, sprich die Bürger dazu zu bewegen, die Klagen fallen zu lassen. Mit der Änderung verbunden wäre eine Gebührenerstattung für 113 weitere Bürger, die sich vom Anschluß- und Benutzungszwang für die Biotonne haben befreien lassen. Wer keine Leistung in Anspruch nimmt, braucht auch nicht dafür zu bezahlen, meinen die klagenführenden Bürger. Politiker dagegen sind findig, wenn es um die Gemeindekasse geht: Durch die nötig werdende Kontrolle der Biomüllverwertung auf dem Grundstück der Tonnen-Befreiten entständen Kosten, die es einzukalkulieren gelte. Eine einleuchtende Rechnung!? – Für den Umwelt-engagierten Bürger, der darauf bedacht ist, Müll zu vermeiden und zu verwerten, jedenfalls nicht. (s-n)

LOKALES IN KÜRZE

26jähriger zog die Gaspistole
Legden - Zu einer Geldstrafe wurde ein 26jähriger Mann verurteilt, der in einem Streit die Gaspistole zog. Seite 2

H. Rotterdam bleibt Obermeister
Ahaus/Gronau - Herbert Rotterdam bleibt Obermeister der Fachinnung Holz und Kunststoff. Seite 3

Nickender mechanischer Nikolaus
Stadtlohn - Wiedergefunden und restauriert wurde ein 70 Jahre alter „Nickender Nikolaus". Seite 4

Biomüll: Klage gegen die Gemeinde

Einen begeisterten Empfang bereiteten die Kinder Nikolaus und Knecht Ruprecht in vielen Städten und Gemeinden des MZ-Erscheinungsgebiets gestern ebenso wie hier in Ahaus. Zahlreiche ehrenamtliche Helfer tragen überall dazu bei, dem Nikolaus bei seiner großen Rundreise zu helfen, um die Kinder zu bescheren. Bild: Heisterborg

Grenzüberschreitende Bekämpfung war Thema

„Drogentourismus" im

The first local page of the Münsterland Zeitung from January 6, 1996. At the top is a picture of the St. Nicholas reception in front of the castle, taken by Janny Heisterborg. Michael Hartmann, with his daughter Sasha on his shoulders, was right there. City archivist Max Pfeiffer had retrieved the original from the archives. © Ahaus City Archives

Even far away: After graduating from the Alexander-Hegius-Gymnasium in 1978, he went to Münster for his civilian service and university studies. There he met the mother of his two daughters, a woman from Canada. With her, he first went to South America, then to Hamburg, and finally to Toronto, Canada.

The memory remained vivid.

But that childhood memory of Saint Nicholas always remained. That's why he wanted to share it with his daughter in 1996. He had returned to Ahaus with her. And it was with her that he ended up in the photo in the Münsterland newspaper. "My mother had sent me the page," he says. But somewhere – whether during a move or simply over the years – the page got lost.

Now a new opportunity arose: He hadn't been to Ahaus for eight years. His mother now lives in a retirement home in Epe, and his brother Markus "Hardy" Hartmann lives with his wife and two children in Wüllen. "I visited them and a few friends, and the St. Nicholas reception just happened to coincide with it," he says with a laugh. This also allowed him to finally show his partner one of his most formative childhood memories.

Santa Claus is not at all intimidating

Together they visited St. Nicholas in front of the castle. "But it wasn't nearly as intimidating as it used to be," says Michael Hartmann. Every now and then a broad English accent creeps into his speech. Every now and then he even switches completely to English. His time in Ahaus is clearly a distant memory.

“And yet, in Canada, he found himself something almost like Ahaus. A quiet little town. Just like Ahaus,” says Annie Mason, smiling at him. The couple lives in Peterborough, Kawartha Lakes. A city that is half the size of Ahaus in terms of area, but has over 120,000 inhabitants. “But of course, we don’t have anything like that,” she adds, gesturing through the castle gardens toward the castle.

Michael Hartmann's visit to Ahaus is already coming to an end. His flight back to Canada is waiting. Does he miss Ahaus? "Very rarely," he admits. A touch of homesickness did creep in a few months ago when he was walking with his partner in Munich, during their layover at the airport. "I do sometimes miss the people here in Germany, the atmosphere on the streets – and the bread," he says. Nevertheless, he'd rather live in Canada – even if it meant only having a memory of St. Nicholas Day.

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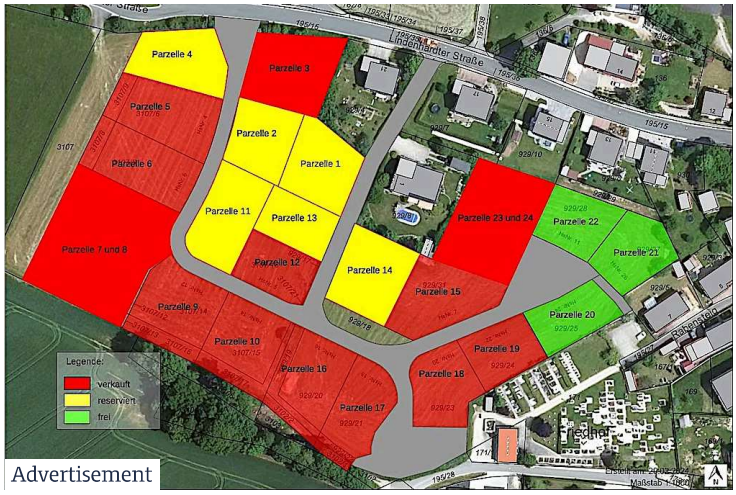

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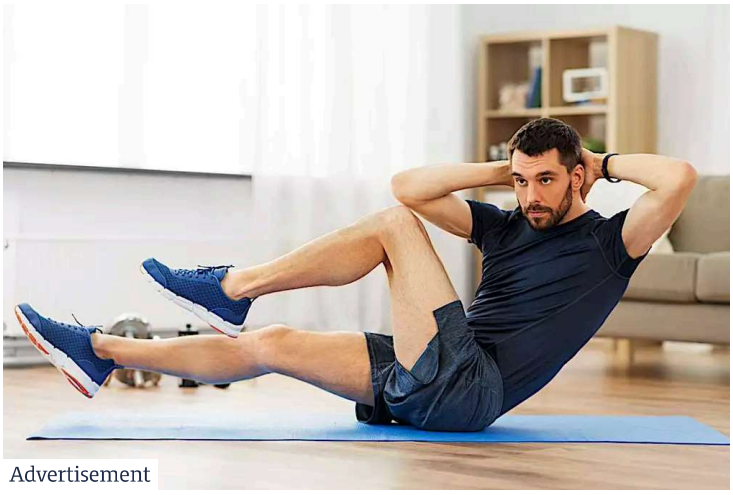
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